

# SAN FRANCISCO ART ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

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## MONTGOMERY STREET GOSSIP

By RALPH STACKPOLE

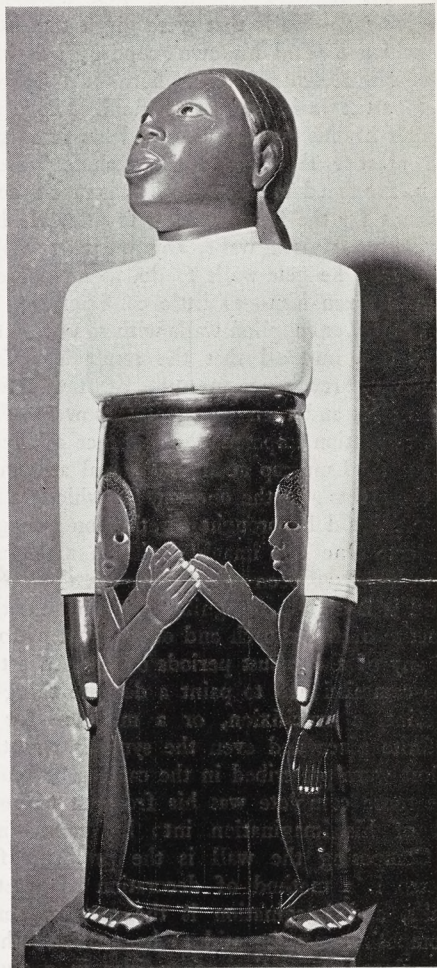
Montgomery Street north of the Monkey Block and south of 1010 hummed with activity during the C.W. A. days, then lapsed into a sort of ghost town for months, but now it is again stirred with movement, with interest and some hope for the winter.

Cunéo's show opened with a bang. At the *Art Center* on that Monday afternoon was the greatest array of artists, the press and Museum men that have been together for a long time. Much was written about the exhibition, and Tommy Howe talked about it over the radio, and it is so popular that by request it is to remain open two weeks longer. The number of sales so far is not alarming and if I don't miss my guess, Cunéo will have most of the pictures back in the studio, which shows that the market lags behind production.

With the sculptures it is different, at least in one case. Sargent Johnson has just finished a fine carving of a negro woman and two children, and the Leon Liebes's have purchased it for their collection. The Art Association heartily congratulates Mr. and Mrs. Liebes and also Sargent Johnson. Roy Zoellin, who lives at Piazzoni's ranch up in the mountains near Mount Torro, has sent to the *Art Center* four wood-carvings beautifully done with all the earmarks of good sculpture. If Tommy Howe is as enthusiastic as I am, he will talk about them over the radio. And if Mrs. Whedon has her way she will sell them.

It was hoped that the Coit Tower would be open within a week after the frescoes were finished and that the people would be so impressed that there would be private commissions galore and frescoes would spread all over the city; San Francisco would even be called the City of Frescoes as Portland is called the City of Roses. But it strikes me that those Coit Tower frescoes are shut up in a tomb.

Mrs. Leon Sloss, however, did not wait



SCULPTURE IN WOOD by Sargent Johnson

until the Tower opened. She commissioned Gordon Langdon to paint a fresco in her dining room; portraits of her three grandchildren in an orchard. An excellent piece of work.

A trip around Montgomery Street shows two things: first some hope, some enthusiasm, second, it must be stressed again, that production is far ahead of the demand. A detailed study of this condition is a worthy one for some art-economist, for, by the beard of Albert Barrows, there is a talent here going to waste.



## WALLS AND COMPOSITION

By RAY BOYNTON

The Coit Tower was one of those opportunities one hopes for but scarcely expects to see. It has been a contention of mine for years that what was needed to make fresco painters (besides enthusiasm for it of course), was wall to work on—*walls that were not too precious*—walls that were given the artist on which to find his own scope of imagination. No fresco painter is born full fledged—no artist is in any other field. The easel painter has his own canvases and his freedom; the practise that makes for technical freedom, for freedom of expression, is much more difficult for the fresco painter to find. He has to use improvised walls, any walls available, and when he gets walls to do, so little freedom is given him—so little confidence!

The tower supplied walls with so very little restriction imposed that the result is a fair and very revealing measure of the artists themselves and their imaginative powers. The one restriction imposed, the sequence of ideas, was not a handicap at all but a real assistance to the artists and the one way in which many people could be brought together on a single project. One can imagine what a madhouse it would have been without it. On the other hand it is easy to recognize that such was the practise of the church and other great patrons of any of the robust periods of art. An artist was commissioned to paint a definite thing—a saint, a crucifixion, or a miracle—for a definite place and even the symbols and the colors were prescribed in the canons. So much the more complete was his freedom to pour all of his imagination into his composing.

Composing the wall is the problem, for fresco is a method of decoration of plaster walls, and imagination is the great solvent. Composing may be said to be no more than the clear presentation of an idea in a given space with due regard to all of the space. There is something to be allowed for earnestness and conviction and awareness adding force to the presentation. It is not interior decoration in the fashion of the day with ornament and aimless nothing as a theme. The mere presentation of a number of things on a wall is not good fresco or good decoration. Pictorial themes forcefully presented are likely to be very bad fresco. In fact fresco is not a foolproof method. It reveals on a so much bigger scale, everything. Smartness becomes irritating; pedantic enumeration of things becomes dull; quaintness becomes

trivial and cloying; overcrowded spaces are tiring to look at; the forceful pictorial effect is disturbing to the wall; things that look chic or bold or brilliant on the scale of a water-color or an easel performance are apt to seem quite empty on a wall.

Composing is the problem—composing with the imagination free to find its own expression in terms of plastic energy. Human effort—human dignity—sorrow—agony—tragedy—joy, these are not expressed by a formula of composing or by the recording of facts in meticulous sequence. They inhere in a man's composing, in the nature of spacing and movement and realization of his design; in the dynamic tensions of energy and repose of the whole; in a rhythm sustained with power and grandeur within the space. They inhere in ideas too, perhaps, but ideas are helpless without plastic energy to give them an imaginative life and a whole expression. The whole of a man's achievement in art might be said to be a measure of energy released in terms of his composing animated by whatever ideas he accepts and is capable of bringing to expression.

Ideas in art have spiritual value in the degree in which they find expression in the dynamics of design. By spiritual value I mean that which moves us through the senses, generating an energy which becomes a part of us. It is permissible to say that *he who has ideas paints them* and he who has not elaborates his (or some one's else) artistic principles.

Is the form or mode of a work of greater import than the content? Is it of greater worth to be orthodox in method or to have something vital to say? These questions are never quite settled in religion, art, or politics. No one need go on record with a statement of principles. Everyone goes on record every time he executes a work. And nowhere is the record more revealing than on the wall.

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Mr. Hamilton Wolf has been invited by the Berkeley Women's City Club to open their season with a "One-man Show." The exhibition consists of about twelve canvases all done since his return from New York City and most of them shown for the first time.

The exhibition opens on the evening of October 9th with an open house for club members and friends.





PROMETHEUS GIVING FIRE—Mural in the Department of Education  
By FRANK BERGMAN

The P.W.A. commissions in San Francisco and the Bay District have been completed during the summer.

They represent the trend of contemporary painting and sculpture in California, and in many instances are a revelation of American thought as well as *The American Scene*.

*The Bulletin* will publish each month a review of some of these projects, and calls attention to Art Association members that a pilgrimage to the buildings in which they are housed will prove stimulating to the artists as well as themselves.

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In his Mission High School decoration Nils Gren has presented the aspirations of modern youth in the modern scene. The painting is composed around two boys' figures, one peering through a microscope, the other holding in his hands the model of a home. The foreground symbolizes the arts in the form of a palette and a piece of sculpture. The American City scene—skyscrapers, water

tanks, gas tanks, radio antennae, airplanes, etc., compose the distance. The color is predominantly warm gray, adapting itself to the environment.

Nils Gren's decoration may be best viewed from the first landing of the east stairway in Mission High School.

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Nelson Poole's mural decorations symbolizing California, are installed in the main entrance of the Roosevelt Jr. High School. There are two panels: one placed opposite the other on the north and south walls of the hall. The panel on the south wall deals with California and the sea. The center of the composition, a family clad in bathing suits, reclining under a tree by a lagoon, is flanked by fog greened California hills. Sea and sky are background.

The panel on the north wall deals with California and the land. The center of the composition is again a family, this time pick-

(Continued on page five)



## VITAL QUESTIONS

*The Bulletin will reserve this column as an Art Forum. We invite the lay members of the Art Association to join in the discussion of problems that are of importance to our Art Community—THE EDITOR.*

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### THE SACRAMENTO JURY

It has been called to our attention by Junius Cravens in the San Francisco News that the jury for the paintings at the State Fair consisted of two members only. Last year there were but two.

From one who knows the difficulties of jurying my sympathies go out to these two. Even if taste and judgment runs along similar lines they must have come to the point where they said, "You choose this one and I'll choose the next." Awards are dependant on the judgment of the jury, and they are answerable to the public, and to the artist. The results should be satisfactory, also, to the jurist. Each is honest in his conviction. Does it come for the one who has the loudest voice to make the decision, or the one with the lasting power?

Ideally there should be five members, but in fairness there must be at least three. If the State Fair must import its jury and finds the expense for five too great, at least a compromise could be arranged for three. If lack of finances is the excuse, why not invite some one who has to officially go up, anyway—like Mr. Cravens—to make the third.

In writing to *The Bulletin*, I ask the San Francisco Art Association to recommend the matter for serious consideration to the committee in charge.

HELEN FORBES.

### A CHALLENGE

Editor The San Francisco Art Association Bulletin.

Dear Editor:

Mr. Victor Anautoff asks in the September issue of the San Francisco Art Association Bulletin: "Why is the Coit Tower still closed?"

The question is pertinent. Who is to answer it?

Indeed why are the responsible bodies, or body, so slow in admitting the public to view the frescoes at the Tower?

Nothing as stimulating as the frescoes on the walls of the Coit Tower has happened in this city in years. Yet, if San Francisco has been born proud of itself, it fails to be proud of what makes it big. It has a genius for belittling its real people.

There is a reason—among many—why conditions are what they are. If you ask me, I will dare say it. It is that *no organization in this city, no particular group, no individual commands enough prestige to make its (or his) opinion a something for the general public to look up to for guidance.* No such a group, no such a person exists in San Francisco because no one is interested enough to make an issue of anything.

Most of the leaders, in our community, are not vitally interested. When they are, they are afraid to speak up. We need plenty of men and women who have ambition for themselves and for their group, for their city, and who have courage enough to stake their ideas against anybody else, if necessary.

We all speak of American art. American art will not be born from gracious words exchanged at annual art banquets, nor will American art be created by a futile hysteria caused by the dejected words of a reformed "Left Bank" hero, such as friend Thomas Craven.

A good piece of vital American art lays on the walls of the Coit Tower (whether created by born or adopted Americans.)

Let the San Francisco people, let the visiting world see the frescoes done by our own San Francisco artists, under the splendid Public Works of Art projects. Who is afraid to have all of us see them? How long shall we be content to keep on smiling around, instead of speaking our mind about this overdue opening of the tower? Smiles, at this time, become us about as much as they do a calf's head under its crown of parsley.

Let us shake up our indifference, and mark with a milestone the opening of the Coit Tower.

JEHANNE BIÉTRY SALINGER.

At the last meeting of the San Francisco Federation of Arts, September 18th, Miss Annette Rosenshine and Mr. Thomas Lamon, two new delegates, representing the Alumni Association, California School of Fine Arts, assumed their duties as members of the Federation.



## CALENDAR OF EXHIBITIONS FOR MONTH OF OCTOBER

*Adams-Danysh Galleries:* Oil paintings and watercolors by Farwell Taylor, October 1 to October 13.—Second annual exhibition of California progressive painters and sculptures, October 15 to October 27.—Exhibition of photographs by Imogene Cunningham, Willard Van Dyke, Edward Weston and Ansel Adams, October 1 to October 29.

*California Palace of the Legion of Honor:* Exhibition of Western oil paintings, October 1 to October 29.—Monthly exhibition of paintings by California artists.

*Paul Elder:* To October 13, Paintings, drawings and collages by Max Ernst (sur-realist).—October 15 to November 3, Watercolors and gouache by Mark Tobey.

*Mills College:* October 12 to November 25, Exhibition of Chinese Art given by Friends of Far Eastern Art.

*Gelber Lilienthal:* Paintings and Prints.

*Courvoisier:* October 1 to October 13, Paintings by Justema.

*S. & G. Gump:* Etchings of the Holy Land and of Europe by Max Pollak, September 24 to October 6.—Exhibition of the prize winning paintings from the State Fair, September 24 to October 6.—The *Fifty Prints* of 1934, October 8 to October 27.—Watercolors by Juanita Vitousek, October 29 to November 9.

*Art Center:* Rinaldo Cuneo Show continued by popular request.—September 24 to October 6, Lithographs by Ray Bertrand.—October 8 to October 29, Taos watercolor by Gene Kloss; Drawings and sculpture by Michael von Meyer.—October 22 to November 2, Oils by Eugene Ivanoff (portraits).

*Roy Vernon Sowers:* Prints and Wood Cuts.

*Oakland Art Gallery:* Annual watercolor show.

(continued from page three)

ing fruit from a richly burdened tree. Farm houses, cattle, a harvesting scene are in the middle distance. Here redwood covered mountains are background.

The color scheme is rich in earthy browns and lush greens paired by blues.

\* \* \*

Prometheous giving fire—the light of learning to man, and the extension of this theme to modern times is the subject of Frank Bergman's mural in the Board Room of the San Francisco Department of Education. The decoration extends along the north and west walls of the room in a continuous freize. The north wall deals with early ramifications of learning: the astrologer, alchemist, astronomer philosopher, navigator, etc., with the figure of Prometheous on the eastern end, and an allegory of learning in the center. This wall backs a slightly raised platform on which are built the permanent seats of the members of the board. The west wall is entirely modern in subject, depicting all manner of current activity in relationship to learning as a means to the good life. The colors of the whole are

subdued in keeping with the room, tending to a harmonious blending of blues and browns. It is painted with oils on canvas.

W.B.H.

Nils Gren has moved his studio and is now located at 1951 Lyon Street.

### NEW BOOKS

*Photographs* by Man Ray (Paris). Published by James Thrall Soby, Hartford, Connecticut.

### REFERENCE READING

*Thinking Straight on Modern Art*, by Henry Rankin Poore. (Putnam's, New York)

*Picture Making, Technique and Inspiration*, by Charles Sinis. (J. B. Lippincott Co.)

*Enjoying Pictures*, by Clive Bell, (Harcourt, Brace & Co.)

*The Technique of Painting*, by Hilaire Hiler. (Oxford University Press)

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Beginning with the October issue, the *Bulletin* will be published on the 1st of each month. Material for each issue must be sent to the San Francisco Art Association, 800 Chestnut Street, by the 20th of the month.



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